

21/04/1997

Awakening the silent voice of women

WOMEN have been silenced by fear and uncertainties for too long now and it is time that they make themselves heard.

Women must first break the silence and then go beyond that to seek proper redress. This was the message delivered by Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir in her speech at a concert recently.

The concert themed Break The Silence was organised by the All Women's Action Society (or Awam) and held at Dewan San Choon in Wisma MCA in Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur recently.

Marina, who is the patron the association, gave a touching speech at the concert organised to raise funds for its programmes.

Marina's speech was met with applause from the audience who were mostly of the fairer sex.

The hilarious Ann Lee stole the limelight with her wit, showmanship and rib-tickling jokes as the emcee.

The concert was also to celebrate women's advances and to awaken the voices that are still not heard.

As the opening, a powerful audio-visual presentation was played.

The presentation was specially composed for the occasion.

Zaiton Mohamed Kasim, the project co-ordinator, said: Break The Silence is the first major fund-raiser that we have organised.

"We are turning to the Malaysian public and the corporate sector to help us keep the centre running so that we can continue to provide the vital services and training that we have thus far been involved.

"We decided that whatever the outcome of the evening, we are proud that we have come this far.

"The months of hard work and long hours were worth it, as we have all come to realise just how much support and respect there is for our work."

Awam is a progressive, non-profit, voluntary non-government women's organisation dedicated to creating awareness and developing consciousness among all Malaysians about the rights of women in general and about issues of violence against women.

Awam hoped to raise RM100,000 through the concert for its on-going work.

Funds raised will go toward expanding its range of services to women in crisis and for its public education programmes.

Currently Awam is actively involved in providing face-to-face and telephone counselling services to women.

Legal advice clinics have also been set up of late.

Awam aims to start an overnight shelter for women, especially battered and abused ones, by the end of the year.

Instant Cafe Theatre, Kualiti Works, Prema Lucas and Shakti Dances came together for the first time to provide an evening of great entertainment.

Shakti Dances put up three energetic dance routines which had deep meaning embedded in every move.

The first one was TAA which showcased the struggles of a man-woman relationship.

Kualiti Works, an all-women theatre group headed by Lee, presented its recent satirical work, This Thing Called Rape, which was a poignant performance by Arfah Abdullah and Jit Murad.

As for Instant Cafe Theatre, it delivered another of its outrageously funny tales and songs.

Among the concert sponsors were the Australian High Commission, Bank of

Commerce and Sime Darby.

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